



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY

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Final Shipment of Legacy PUREX Waste Leaves SRS

After more than 15 years of preparation, SRS employees celebrated yet another milestone along the road to final cleanup when the last shipments of legacy PUREX waste left the Site on September 10.

PUREX solvent, which stands for Plutonium Uranium Extraction solvent, was used to separate uranium and plutonium from fission products during the operation of the Site's Canyons. The resulting waste from this process was containerized and stored at SRS in its original liquid state. In late 2007, SRS began transporting the waste to Materials and Energy Corporation (M&EC) in Oak Ridge Tenn. where it was stabilized and prepared for permanent disposition and sent back to SRS.

"This waste posed unique challenges for SRS," said Jake Nims, project engineer. "PUREX solvent contains americium, curium, and plutonium, which has a radiological half-life of 24,000 years. It also contains hazardous materials, such as mercury and benzene. We simply were not permitted, or equipped, to handle the final disposition of this type of waste at the Site. We had to ship it to the most qualified designated burial site, and in this case, the Nevada Test Site (NTS) was identified as the most appropriate to handle the job."

The 330m³ of stabilized solidified PUREX waste was stored at SRS's N-Area in 129 fabricated stainless steel containers where it awaited DOE approval for final disposition. Thanks to the Recovery Act, and after detailed negotiations with the Nevada Test Site (NTS) and the state of Nevada, DOE granted Solid Waste Management the approval to begin transport of the waste from SRS to NTS – where it will be placed in a mixed waste disposal cell and buried permanently.

"Each shipment of this material required the utmost attention to detail while adhering to state and national laws for transporting waste of this kind," said Nims. SRS contracted

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Hittman Transport Services, a trucking company owned by Energy Solutions, to transport the waste to Nevada.

In all, each truck carried a load of 31,000 pounds and after 21 shipments, all containers of this legacy radiological and hazardous waste traveled more than half way across the country to its final resting place at NTS.

"This milestone marks another significant achievement in our effort to treat and dispose of the remaining legacy waste at SRS. Along with our 1000th contact-handled shipment and the start of remote-handled TRU waste shipments to Waste Isolation Pilot Plant, this has been a year of major milestones for the Solid Waste Management team," said John Gilmour, director of Solid Waste Management.

With the completion of PUREX shipments, attention will shift to other storage and disposal missions of legacy wastes at the Site in support of the Recovery Act Project. SRS is on track to achieve its goal of a 40 percent reduction in the Site's operational footprint by 2011.

Additional information on the Department of Energy's Office of Environmental Management and the Savannah River Site can be found at <http://www.em.doe.gov> or <http://www.srs.gov>. For more information about the SRS Recovery Act Project, visit www.srs.gov/recovery.

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Photo caption: One of the final shipments of SRS legacy PUREX waste left the site boundaries on September 10 destined for final disposition. In all, more than 651,000 pounds have been transported for permanent disposal.